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LINCOLN
AND THE DEBATE WITH
DOUGLAS
IN '58

WRITTEN FOR
THE ALLIANCE CIRCLE
BY
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READ AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE SECRETARY
JOHN E. MORRIS, Esq.
CLEVELAND, OHIO, SEPTEMBER 17, 1915



“Their thinking it right and our thinking it wrong is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy.”

“Let us have faith that right makes might and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”

I have taken these two sentences from Mr. Lincoln's Cooper Institute speech. In a proper sense they are the key to his character. In the first sentence he fully concedes that those who do not agree with him on public questions are honest in their convictions. Until the day of his death he never doubted the motives of those who opposed him unless the dishonesty of their opposition was easily apparent. I think he sometimes entertained a somewhat indefinite idea that Judge Douglas was not on good terms with his own conscience in his defense of the slave power; for he referred, with a sort of holy though indignant surprise, to Judge Douglas's flippant statement that he did not care whether slavery was voted up or voted down.

He could not understand how any man of Judge Douglas's ability and position should be indifferent to the merits of a question that could be measured only by the standards of right and wrong, and that was of the gravest import to the integrity of the Union.

In the second sentence Mr. Lincoln gave striking evidence of the loftiness of his own character.

History is largely colored by the prejudices of its writers and for this, if for no other reason, it is not always errant.

In respect to the inceptive controversy over American slavery we have the salient facts, without concerning ourselves about the historians, in the official records of the Convention of 1787. If these were destroyed and all recollection of them lost the whole series of the essential features of the controversy could be reproduced from the debates between Mr. Lincoln and Judge Douglas in '58 and Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech.

These two things, the Cooper Institute Speech and the debate with Judge Douglas, were the determining factors in that rare event—a National Crisis. Compromise had failed; calm deliberation, except by Mr. Lincoln him-

self, was seldom heard; advocates for and against were carried away by the violence of their own passion. Above the clamor of the contending hosts his was the only voice heard counseling patience and common sense.

It is not the debate with Judge Douglas that concerns us now; it is the policy developed by Mr. Lincoln in that debate and its influence upon the trend of affairs that ended in the Civil War, and upon his own career; it was the determining factor in both.

If we keep in mind all that the inevitable conflict meant to the Union and to the welfare of mankind everywhere we shall come to know why Abraham Lincoln is our greatest historical asset. It strikes me as a strange fact that very few men have contributed largely to the not numerous righteous policies that have determined the trend of affairs throughout the world in the past—that is, men who making policies thought right concerning them. Mr. Lincoln is one of the few. I do not say this in disparagement of the general mass; for I know, as you do, that every intelligent and honest citizen contributes in great or small degree to the general good. And to that few, who make the world's poli-

cies, it is just that we apply the rigid test of the two principles I have taken from Mr. Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech: "Do they think it right?" Do they? "Let us to the end dare to do our duty," in the light of a faith that right is the only thing that endures.

And these leaders of the world's thought—these few—we never find them just where we might, with reason, expect to find them. The wise men found Him in a stable and He found his disciples among the fisherman. No one would have entered a Quaker Meeting house in search of a Lord Protector of England nor have thought that a poacher would one day write Hamlet and Lear. And surely no one would have thought to find in a rude cabin in Kentucky the most perfect model of all that an honest and unselfish politician and statesman should be. But so it is. Our preconceived notions of men and of things go often enough awry to convince even the always right that sometimes they must be in the wrong. The really vast, superimportant things in the life of a Nation come seldom enough—and it is good that it is so. The small things are big enough for most of us and we get on better in shallow water than in deep.

When the world needs a big man—big intellectually and morally—to lead it in a really vital matter it either chooses him from among his fellows or he so impresses himself upon the public mind that it is not a matter of choice at all. And the object of leadership in a really vital thing in National life—what of that?

It is to lead the vast, struggling, helpless, objectless mass we call humanity—that cannot lead itself; that knows the right only when a leader equal to the task points the way and appeals, when that is best, to its sense of justice more than to its reason. National life is dual. We see and feel the material side of it—the side of it that effects our personal convenience and comfort directly. And then there is that side of National life that is purely ethical—that concerns itself with the right and the wrong of things. And yet it is true also that while the ethical side of National life has a direct influence upon the purely material, the purely material has no office to perform in the ethical life of our dual National existence. What they shall eat of wherewithal they shall be clothed has nothing at all to do with “their thinking it right and our thinking it wrong.”

In the course of time there came into our dual National life a question involving both the material and the ethical, and upon the solution of that question it depended whether both should survive or both should fail. It was the last scene in a world drama men have been writing for these thousands of years, since some first began to oppress their fellows.

And realizing its import the world stopped to look and saw a Man it did not know—Abraham Lincoln. A great teacher once told the world what to seek first and that all things worth while would be added afterwards. You could write the inner meaning of that upon the tomb of Mr. Lincoln but not upon the tomb of Judge Douglas—though he too was a very great man.

Have you noted that men of this kind are of the soil; not of the great but of the common; trained more by Nature and less by the Schools. It needs must be so for the soul of Nature is of the ethical and your great man must come from the soul of Nature—call it what you will. That's Abraham Lincoln.

And when you attempt to explain the why of his appearing or his value to the whole

world, I think you will accept my view, though you may not call it by the same name. In 1858 a crisis—vast, menacing—was closing around our people; it had been growing for more than a hundred years; it was the constantly increasing demands of the slave power. The noises of the coming storm were more ominous each day than on the day before. Men quailed before it and spoke of compromise, though compromise had failed. We needed a man of poise, of strong heart, of steady hand—a man who had faith that right makes might and who would dare to do his duty as he understood it.

The Convention of 1787 well knew that the question bristled with danger to the stronger government they were trying to devise and which now exists under the present Constitution. It is curious to note that in the Convention of 1787 the advocates of a strong central government were the Southern delegates, for the most part; while the advocates of the very principle afterwards known as states-rights were from the North. Both parties reversed their position when the dispute grew more violent over slavery.

It was very generally recognized, both

North and South, that no one was expected to interfere with the Institution in the states in which it then existed. But efforts were not wanting a little later to make all new territory free territory. The first was the celebrated ordinance of 1787; the second, the Missouri compromise of 1820. After the annexation of Texas the question was up again and again compromise, that of 1850, put off the evil day. It might have remained moribund for a long time but for Stephen A. Douglas. Matters had remained quiet for years when he introduced his famous Kansas-Nebraska bill in the Senate which, when passed, actually repealed the Missouri compromise and practically opened the new territories to slavery. The Civil War began in '54, not '61. In October, '54 Judge Douglas delivered a speech in defense of his Kansas-Nebraska bill at Springfield. In it he made the best possible defense of the bill which, by its repeal of the Missouri compromise, had opened Kansas and Nebraska to slavery; it was able and adroit. And though through its enactment he had lost much of the active friendship of his political adherents (for there was an anti-slavery element in the Democratic party of Illinois) he

was so winning in his manner and appeal that he rapidly resumed his old ascendancy over them. He was one of those orators who, as Mr. Lincoln said, was well qualified to make you believe that a horse chestnut was a chestnut horse. The next day, October 4th, Mr. Lincoln answered him. If you have a desire to read a speech that is a model of assault, tempered by a perfect spirit of fairness and respect for the opinion of others, read this one. Said he: "I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not exist among them they would not introduce it. If it did now exist among us we should not instantly give it up."

In reply to Judge Douglas's taunt that, in Mr. Lincoln's view, the white people of Nebraska were good enough to govern themselves but not good enough to govern a few miserable negroes—Mr. Lincoln replied: "I doubt not that the people of Nebraska are and will continue to be as good as the average of people elsewhere. I do not say the contrary. What I do say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent." There is in this taunt and in the

reply a good exemplar of the dissimilar characters of the two men. The one winning, plausible—and unfair; the other almost childishly honest and transparently direct and logical in reply. There was war between them now—a war between friends. The partisans of both stood aside. We cannot believe that Mr. Lincoln realized, even faintly, that by his reply to Judge Douglas on the 4th he had made himself the pivot on which one of those very rare world movements was turning; but so it was, and more; for through it came leadership—and martyrdom. The next four years were years of warfare and truce but not of peace at any time. In '58 each girded himself for the final battle, for they were rival candidates for a Senatorship from Illinois. Curious things happen in politics. It was at this time that Horace Greeley, with characteristic middlesomeness, advised the Republicans of Illinois to support Judge Douglas for the Senate, and gave as a reason for his advice the fact that Judge Douglas had fought his own party in the Senate and prevented the imposition of the infamous LeCompton Constitution upon Kansas. "Douglas is a true man," said he. "Forget the past and sustain the righteous."

It was as Mr. Lincoln once said, "Like calling the righteous and not sinners to repentance."

Mr. Greeley's advice was not accepted in Illinois, and Mr. Lincoln was made the nominee of the Republicans for the Senate. The great antagonists now stood face to face in '58, rival candidates for a seat in the Senate that but one could have; and, as we now know, both determined to seek a nomination for the Presidency in 1860.

Mr. Lincoln realized that the anti-slavery forces by dividing their political influence through the old Whig and the new Republican parties would suffer continuing defeat at the hands of the united and powerful Democratic party.

He now gave an unmatched example of political generalship in bringing all the anti-slavery forces to the Republican standard and in splitting the Democratic hosts into irreconcilable fragments—and that too by using Judge Douglas himself for the purpose at Freeport. It was Mr. Lincoln's persuasive words that gathered into the Republican fold Whigs, Democrats, Abolitionists and Free-soilers; men of all parties and of no party who were opposed, like Mr. Lincoln, not to slavery in its old

haunts, but to its introduction into the new territories. That August Tribunal, the Supreme Court of The United States, probably through connivance with Judge Douglas and Buchanan, as Mr. Lincoln rather openly suggested in his House Timber Figure that so roused the anger of Judge Douglas, added fuel to the war of words through its decision in the Dred Scott case. The Court declared, in effect, that a negro had no rights to speak of and that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories. If the issue had not been joined before it was now; and the attorneys in the case were Mr. Lincoln and Judge Douglas, with a vast array of assistant counsel on both sides. Mr. Lincoln, though with profound respect for the Court, had this to say of the decision:

“We **think** the Dred Scott decision is erroneous. We know the Court that made it has often overruled its own decisions, and we shall do what we can to have it overrule this. We offer no resistance to it.”

Again the two sentences at the head of this article must come to mind—Mr. Lincoln’s calm deference to the opinions of others and his adherence to a line of duty as he understood it. Who or what was making these two

great men the chief figures in a world old conflict **for its undoing**? Those who believe that Providence has a care for the affairs of men can answer the question easily enough. Those who do not so believe cannot answer the question rationally at all and leave it perforce with chance.

Of course Judge Douglas assailed Mr. Lincoln for declaring the Dred Scott decision erroneous—a term any lawyer would have used. “What?”—said he—“oppose the Supreme Court! Is it not sacred? To resist is anarchy.” Mr. Lincoln had just said—“We **think** the decision is erroneous. We offer no resistance to it.” This assault on Mr. Lincoln was not up to the Douglas standard. He knew better, but he did not know that with it he himself had forged a bolt with which Mr. Lincoln would unhorse him later. In accepting the Senatorial nomination Mr. Lincoln, against the advice of his friends, had said this: “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the house to fall but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.”

Could Judge Douglas hear this and remain silent? Not at all. He tore a passion into tatters in calling his long time friend a disorganizer and a destroyer of the Union—as he was, though not in the Judge Douglas sense. If you wish to see the distinguishing features of a really fine building you must stand at that certain place from which you can best observe them; mark their proportions; separate their beauties into their units; estimate their strength; analyze, compare and decide upon the merits of the structure as a whole.

If we apply this rule to Mr. Lincoln's "House-divided against itself" speech we may find an excuse for the severe criticism made against it by some of his most intimate friends. To them even it was radical and sectional; but they were too close to it. Looking at it from the vantage point of more than fifty years we can see not only that it was of goodly proportions, that it was strong and beautiful in texture, but that above all it was true and—timely. In making it he was wiser, much wiser, than his ^{61, 2}political enemies, and he was much wiser than his friends. He was eliminating the dross that Judge Douglas was

constantly ejecting and he was refining and defining the issues in the Senatorial campaign; and more, he was hewing the timbers for the platform of 1860. He suddenly brought the hitherto guerrilla warfare to an end by challenging Judge Douglas to debate the issues with him publicly and at several points in Illinois. He had been holding up the records of Judge Douglas and his party so long that no one could forget either and always he contrasted the records of both with what he called the profound central truth of his own party—"slavery is wrong and ought to be dealt with as a wrong."

The Judge was not pleased with the prospect. To his friends he said: "I do not feel, between you and me, that I want to go into this debate, the whole country knows me and has me measured. Lincoln, as regards myself, is comparatively unknown; and if he gets the best of this debate—and I want to say he is the ablest man the Republicans have got,—I shall lose everything and Lincoln will gain everything. Should I win I shall gain but little.

We can sympathize with him. He knew what he meant in saying "If Lincoln gets the

best of me he will gain everything and I will lose everything." There was in this the spirit of prophecy. It is evident that Mr. Lincoln must have won the battle for he gained everything, even undying fame, and the Judge lost.

We know now, as the people of '58 could not know, that the verdict rendered then and confirmed on appeal by the arbitrament of war was inevitable. But the Judge accepted the challenge, and the debates were held at Ottawa, August 21st, '58; at Freeport, August 27; at Jonesboro, September 15th; at Charleston, September 18th; at Galesburg, October 7th; at Quincy, October 13th; and at Alton, October 15th.

What Champions they were!—these two incomparables. The one, short of stature, broad shouldered, handsome in a way, the most brilliant figure in the political life of the day, magnetic and winning in his eloquence—all these things he had with which to captivate and win the public favor. And the other—tall, thin, not handsome, but possessed of the rugged homeliness that appeals to all that is best in human nature and wins by its transparent honesty. He knew the difference and

he said: "We have to fight this battle upon principle and upon principle only."

I have not discovered that, in any of his speeches, Judge Douglas even attempted to fight the battle upon principle but, and this is in his favor, how could he? His defense, for he was on the defensive from the start, was based upon his erroneous view of the Constitutional rights of slave holders, popular sovereignty and expediency. His speeches were fine, strong—as viewed from his side of the case—and, to a large degree, they won the applause of the multitude. But even a cursory reading discloses that his position was untenable and his theories impossible and unsound. This is clearly proven by their effect upon his own party. One cannot discover that he was entirely satisfied with his own position and theories though he both advocated and defended them with eloquence and power. He had need to do both, as he discovered in the opening at Ottawa. His long, lean, keen friend of many years spared neither him nor his theories. Mr. Lincoln, as he said from the beginning, felt that the Cause he represented was right and just; that it was the Cause of all men everywhere, both bond and free; that

it was the Cause of the slave owner, as well as of him who owned no slave; of the Union and not of dis-union as his opponent charged.

While foreign to my purpose, I shall ask you to indulge me in the use of a few extracts from the speeches delivered at Ottawa; they are representative of the whole series; though, as the discussion proceeded Mr. Lincoln brought more power and clearness to it by forcing Judge Douglas to a quasi abandonment of some of his positions and by compelling him, much against his will, to adhere more closely to the real issues. Said Judge Douglas:

“I appear before you today for the purpose of discussing the leading political topics which now agitate the public mind.”

This was most explicit and dignified. But the Judge did not confine his remarks to the “leading political topics” that caused his appearing; he discussed many that were not leading, and made some rather personal remarks about Mr. Lincoln himself. He gave a history of the old line Whig and Democratic parties in order to prove that while they differed on questions relating to the National Bank, the tariff, and other matters, they were

in point of fact in full agreement on the main question—and I suspect they were.

If the extracts he read from State and National platforms of the Whig party were exact, the Whigs, and Mr. Lincoln was one of them—though always of the anti-slavery wing—were as deep in the black mud as the Democrats were in the mire. All this had no bearing on the main questions that, as he had said in the beginning, “now agitate the public mind.”

The new political alignment had eliminated the old Whig party and its platforms and brought into existence the Republican party, whose ranks were being filled by the old Whigs, Free-soilers, and entirely too many Democrats for the Judge's comfort. He was adroit in this for it gave him an opportunity to even some old scores—especially with Trumbull, an old time Democrat. He charged that Lincoln and Trumbull had entered into a conspiracy—the one to take the Whigs, and the other the Democrats into the Abolition camp.

Mr. Lincoln replied that he had better means of knowing about that than Judge Douglas could by any possibility have, and

that it was only one of Mr. Douglas's "consciences" beliefs. It was evidently the intention of Judge Douglas to fasten the stigma of abolitionism on Mr. Lincoln; and it was a stigma in those days.

Judge Douglas, whether satisfied or not with them, did not hesitate to express his views with a direct clearness a man of lesser courage would not have used. He was in the North where public sentiment, while divided, was growing more strongly anti-salvery every day, and the Judge had, as he intimated, a great reverence for public sentiment.

But let us permit Judge Douglas to speak for himself. "If you desire negro citizenship, if you desire them to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to adjudge your rights, then support Mr. Lincoln and the black Republican party. For one, I am opposed to negro citizenship in any and every form. I believe this government was made on the white basis. I believe it was made by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and I am in favor of confining citizenship to white men, men of European birth and descent, instead of conferring it upon negroes,

Indians and other inferior races. Mr. Lincoln, following the example and lead of all the little abolition orators, reads from the Declaration of Independence that all men were created equal, and then asks, 'How can you deprive a negro of that equality which God and the Declaration of Independence award him.' He and they maintain that negro equality is guaranteed by the laws of God and that it is asserted in the Declaration of Independence. If they think so, of course they have a right to say so and so vote. I do not question Mr. Lincoln's conscientious belief that the negro was made his equal, and hence is his brother; but for my own part I do not regard the negro as my equal and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever. He holds that the negro was born his equal and yours, and that he was endowed with equality by the Almighty, and that no human law can deprive him of these rights which were guaranteed to him by the Supreme Ruler of the universe."

"Now I do not believe that the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. If He did He has been a long time demonstrating the fact. The negro belongs to an inferior race and must always

occupy an inferior position. I do not hold that because the negro is our inferior that therefore he ought to be a slave. By no means can such a conclusion be drawn from what I have said. On the contrary, I hold that humanity and Christianity both require that the negro shall have and enjoy every right, every privilege, and every immunity consistent with the safety of the society in which he lives."

Political amenities, in those days, were about what they are now, and I suppose the Judge felt impelled to address a few personal remarks to Mr. Lincoln on this wise:

"I knew him in his youth and had a sympathy with him because of the uphill struggle we both had in life. He was then just as good at telling an anecdote as now, he could beat any of the boys wrestling, or running a foot race, in pitching quoits, or tossing a copper; could ruin more liquor than all of the boys of the town together; and the dignity and impartiality with which he presided at a horse race or fist fight excited the admiration and won the praise of everybody that was present and participated."

To this sort of pleasantry Mr. Lincoln replied that he "was not very much accustomed to flattery, and that since it came from so great a man, he felt that he was rather like the Hoosier with the ginger bread, when he said he reckoned he loved it better than any other man and got less of it." And later on, in reply to the statement that he in his youth could ruin large quantities of liquor, said that "while he never had used liquor himself it was true that he had sold it over a counter and that Judge Douglas had spent a good deal of his time on the outside of that self same counter."

As I read Judge Douglas's opening address at Ottawa and tried to measure the skill and force with which he marshalled his arguments, my faith in Mr. Lincoln's ability to tear down the artfully built structure grew a little weak. I could not anticipate just how he would reply to it; but I did remember that, at that time, it was conceded by the Bar that he was the most astute lawyer in Illinois. After reading Mr. Lincoln's reply I found my sentiments most adequately expressed by a lady who had listened to both speeches. She remarked that when she listened to Douglas she felt sorry for Lincoln, and when she listened

to Lincoln she felt **so** sorry for Douglas. Let us now listen to Mr. Lincoln:

“When a man hears himself somewhat misrepresented it provokes him,—at least I find it so with myself; but when misrepresentation becomes very gross and palpable, it is more apt to amuse him.” That was the answer.

Judge Douglas had not stated Mr. Lincoln’s position on any question precisely. As covering this point Mr. Lincoln said: “I know that if I ask the Judge to show where or when I said, that if I could not extinguish slavery, the Union should be destroyed, he could not show it. He would say, ‘I don’t mean to quote from you, but this is the result of what you said.’ But I have the right to ask and I do ask now, Did you not put it in such a form that an ordinary reader or listener would take it as an expression from me?” That was the point. The Judge was inclined to put his quotations from Mr. Lincoln in that form. Mr. Lincoln said:

“When Southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we, I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the Institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of it in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the same.

I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted; but for their tardiness in this I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the South. When they remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them, not grudgingly, but fully and fairly; but all this, in my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our free territory than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law. The law which forbids the bringing of slaves **from** Africa, and that which has so long forbidden the taking of them **to** Nebraska, can hardly be distinguished on any moral principle; and the repeal of the former could find quite as plausible excuses as that of the latter. I will say here, while upon this subject, that I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the **states** where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior po-

sition. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that, notwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence,—the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas that he is not my equal in many respects; but in the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he **is my** equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.”

“Judge Douglas has read from my speech in Springfield, in which I say that ‘a house divided against itself cannot stand.’ Does the Judge say it can stand? If he does, then there is a question of veracity, not between him and me, but between the Judge and an authority of a somewhat higher character.”

And, addressing the audience,—“I ask you to consider whether, so long as the moral constitution of men’s minds shall continue to be the same, after this generation and assemblage sink into the grave and another shall arise, with the same moral and intellectual

development we have,—whether, if that institution is standing in the same irritating position in which it now is, it will not continue an element of division? If so, then I have a right to say that, in regard to this question, the Union **is** a House divided against itself; and when the Judge reminds me that I have often said to him that the Institution of slavery has existed for eighty years in some states, and yet it does not exist in some others, I agree to the fact, and I account for it by looking at the position in which our fathers originally placed it,—restricting it from the new territories where it had not gone, and legislating to cut off its source by the abrogation of the slave trade, thus putting the seal of legislation against its spread. The public mind **did** rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction.”

A little later, he added, “if I have brought forward anything not a fact, if he will point it out, it will not even ruffle me to take it back. But if he will not point out anything erroneous in the evidence, is it not rather for him to show, by a comparison of the evidence, that I have reasoned falsely, than to call the ‘kind, amiable, intelligent gentleman a liar.”

It would seem that these statements of Mr. Lincoln's position, made by himself, should have prevented the Judge from making further misstatements; but they did not succeed entirely in doing so. Mr. Lincoln thought the questions at issue between them too serious to admit of what he called Judge Douglas's "platform jugglery."

It was at Freeport, during the second debate, that Mr. Lincoln delivered the most adroit stroke of the contest. If there is anything of finesse in the political career of any man of note in American history comparable with this move of Mr. Lincoln's at Freeport, his biographer has failed to mention it. He asked Judge Douglas this question:—"Can the people of a United States territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a state constitution?" He asked this question despite the advice and even against the remonstrances of his friends. They knew, and so did Mr. Lincoln, just what Judge Douglas's answer would be. They protested that Douglas's answer would defeat Lincoln and secure his own reelection to the Senate—and so it did, but it

made Lincoln President of the United States.

Now it is important to remember that Judge Douglas had invented a doctrine, popular in his own party in the North, known as "popular sovereignty,"—that is, the absolute right of the people of a territory to decide for themselves whether or not they would admit slavery in their midst.

Judge Douglas also most strenuously supported the decision in the Dred Scott case wherein the Supreme Court declared that slaves being property could not, under the constitution, be excluded from a territory. Even the keen intellect of Judge Douglas could not reconcile these two things. Mr. Lincoln knew that if he said "no" in his answer the Democrats of Illinois, who were somewhat opposed to the enlargement of slave territory, would not return him to the Senate; and that if he said "yes" the Democratic party of the South would repudiate him. The Judge met the question boldly and with rare confidence said "yes," and explained at length just how it could be done.

It is recorded that his Democratic constituents in Illinois "went wild" over the clever way in which Judge Douglas had escaped Lin-

coln's trap. But had he? When the Freeport debate appeared in the Pro-slavery Press it seemed not. A mighty protest went up. Douglas was denounced as a traitor to the South, as a repudiator of the Dred Scott decision he had professed to uphold, as a liar and a hypocrite, and as everything else that an enraged vocabulary could supply.

Mr. Lincoln had said in respect to this question—"I am after larger game, the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." The answer made by Judge Douglas shut the door of the presidency against him. Did Mr. Lincoln think it might open that door to himself? We do not know, but that was the result. How fortunate! If we know the abilities and characters of the noted men of that period we know too that Mr. Lincoln was the only man among them equal to the task imposed by the Civil War. Practically unknown before his conflict with Judge Douglas he came out of it with a National reputation; the kindest, the fairest, as he was the most powerful opponent of the slave power. Today the South claims him as her own, knowing that through all the sorrows and disasters of the Civil War he was her abiding friend.



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